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16. COMMON COOT *FULICA ATRA* FROM KYONGNOSLA IN EAST SIKKIM

In early March 2000, there were reports of migrating water birds in groups of 50+ from the Kyongnosla area of east Sikkim (c. 3000 m). On March 15, 2000 one bird that had fallen from the sky from its group of c. 100 birds was caught and taken to a nearby settlement. Mr. Bishnu Sharma, Supervisor, Kyongnosla Alpine Sanctuary, immediately retrieved it and brought it to my office at Deorali, Gangtok the next day in a cardboard carton. The bird was an adult common coot *Fulica atra*. It was alert and active, stabbing at my hand with its bill, and it drank water copiously. It seemed unhurt and had no external injuries. As I had no apparatus to ring or measure it, or take photographs, I took it to my residence at the Forest Colony, Baluakhani, Gangtok (1,800 m) that evening, where it escaped. For over an hour it wandered in the garden before fluttering down to the road and going into the forest scrub further down. I

watched for it till dark and could not find it the next morning.

The common coot, which has a wide distribution range over the Indian subcontinent, has not been recorded from Sikkim so far, though the area is a well known traditional flyway for water birds on return migration northwards in spring (Ali and Ripley 1983; Ali 1962) probably due to paucity of field surveys. This could therefore be considered a new record for Sikkim.

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17. SIGHTING OF THE LESSER FLORICAN *SYPHEOTIDES INDICA* IN GIR INTERPRETATION ZONE, DEVALIYA, GIR SANCTUARY

On June 27, 2000, I had gone to the Gir Interpretation Zone (GIZ), Devaliya, specially developed for tourism in the Gir Sanctuary. I had gone to check the health of the lions. The GIZ has a fenced area of 412 ha, with c. 100 ha of Savannah grassland. During the visit, Sardulbhai, one of my staff, informed me that an unknown bird similar to a small peahen had been spotted near the lions' feeding cage. On reaching the spot, I saw a domestic hen-sized bird with a crest on its head, at some distance. When we approached, the bird ran into a patch of tall grass and hid there in silence. To my great jubilation, I confirmed it as a male lesser florican (*Sypheotides indica*) through my binoculars and immediately took some photographs. It is for the first time that a lesser florican has been photographed in the Gir Protected Area. The same species was reported from the Gir Protected

Area (and the sighting confirmed) during May and June, 1982. According to Sankaran *et al.* (1992) the lesser florican sometimes visits Babara Vidi grassland, Maliya taluka, Junagadh district, an ideal habitat for lesser florican. Our field staff and researchers have observed florican in this area several times.

From June 27 to July 10, I visited GIZ, Devaliya regularly, twice a day, morning and evening. The florican was mostly seen in the grasslands. I saw it display twice. To ascertain the presence of other lesser florican (especially female) in GIZ, I used a group of trackers, but sighted only the same male. After July 10, 2000, the bird left the GIZ, Devaliya.

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18. GREY-HEADED LAPWINGS *VANELLUS CINEREUS* SEEN AROUND MACHILIPATNAM, KRISHNA DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH, INDIA

On February 17, 2001, at around 0645 hrs, I was watching waders of several species, along with other birds, on a largely flooded field, 1-2 km northwards of Chilakalapudi, Machilipatnam. Amongst the waders, which included several wood sandpipers, little ringed plovers, Pacific golden-plovers and a few little stints, were twelve larger birds. An initial look was enough to place them with lapwings (*Vanellus*) and the birds looked superficially similar to pictures of white-tailed lapwing, which I had seen.

Their posture was upright, with a small to medium sized, smooth round head with no crest. Size was similar to red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus*

indicus) of which there were three in a nearby field. The head and neck were a uniform pale grey colour with no supercilium or eye-stripe. The bill was bright yellow and no wattles could be seen on the face. A wide (1-2 cm) black breast band separated the grey of the neck from the belly, which was white. Legs were bright yellow, the same colour as the bill. The wings, which were seen when one of the birds flew a short distance, showed a very distinctive 'tri-coloured' pattern, with black primaries, white secondaries and brownish coverts, in three, straight edged blocks of colour.

The birds were watched for 30-45 minutes through a Bushnell Spacemaster Telescope with